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November 16, 2012: Best Practices for Adapting to
Sea Level Rise and Flooding


Hampton Roads Sea Level Rise/Flooding
Adaptation Forum

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Forum Notes: Land Use and Planning Breakout Group

HR Adaptation Forum

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November 16, 2012. Hampton Roads SLR/Flooding Adaptation Forum.

Land Use and Planning Breakout Group

Concerns, critical needs, vulnerabilities

--how do SLR or flooding affect your communities?

Natl Park Service has concerns with access to coastal parks, and when temperature increases affect visitors. Colonial Williamsburg concerned about archaeological sites prone to flooding. (Direct impact and longterm viability of assets and access)

VB concerned about SLR impact on tax base—waterfront/high value properties impacted by SLR, also impact on tourism. Conflict between tax revenue and protection—what are true costs? (How does protection –seawalls etc. impact property values). Ex. Lynnhaven Colony wants 5-6 ft wall but this will obstruct view that is basis for property value/tax base.

Communities want to pick and choose types of protection that are acceptable to them, but these decisions need to be made based on science, cost, sustainability. People unrealistically assume federal funding will be available.

Experiencing pushback from people outside the floodplain who don't want their tax \$ going to protect property of those on the water. Portsmouth is 20-30% on floodplain—will be 75-80% after 60 in SLR. Huge tax base reduction. When faced with this, some people throw up hands and take no action. Could be more constructive to talk about 20 or 30 year time horizon because people can see that they may still be around then. Important to find a “reasonable planning horizon.”

Need a planning and adaptation framework (and language) for the region that deals with rural vs urban, planning horizon, etc. This is a critical issue right now. Understanding communication aspects. Ways to break down a complex problem and communicate with and frame the issue for local officials. “Buying your risk down in steps” from Molly Mitchell’s talk. You have to start somewhere.

Isle of Wight faces a lot of recurrent road flooding. How do we upgrade our roads (with VDOT). Also have arterials that are evacuation routes—need to be maintained and flood routinely in storm events. Floyd in '99 flooded Franklin and Isle of Wight Co. What happens if a bridge washes out. Counties have to deal with VDOT on roads and are dependent on VDOT. Need to address evacuation routes at a regional level (not part of regional transportation needs survey?).

Agree on need for regional coordination—not just between planning departments, but among different entities within planning departments. Mixed messages are a problem. When fear and protectionism are issues, the only things people consider are drastic measures, hard structures—without looking at other impacts (environmental etc.). People are wasting funds along the same

waterway in different jurisdictions by doing a bunch of things without any coordination. Studies have to cross jurisdictions. Example of a framework is the VIMS guidance on shoreline erosion. State policies that give systemic guidelines. Learning to live with water. Not everyone has the GIS expertise to use maps that are available—need consistent, accessible technologies. Need all of the data on one map.

Critical need: Easily accessible maps that show a variety of data, Consistent communication strategy and definitions, consistent resolution, units, data types, methods.

Define regional? Who is coordinating the process? By waterway? By peninsula? “The Region” needs to be defined—is it all of Tidewater VA? Developing a combined approach (multilevel like Dutch model). Need someone appointed to implement strategy. Dylan rule limits local government authority. Need state policy that addresses SLR—enabling authority has to come from state. VIMS recurrent flooding study is a start, then follow-up with strategy.

Where is \$ coming from? Ex. National Park Service doesn’t have money to deal with SLR in plans. We naturally think about \$ in terms of one, two, four-year budgets. But if you look at property value in the long-term, accounting for SLR—eventually the property will not be worth anything. Think about lifespan of property and planning time horizon. What are the economics going to look like over that time horizon. If we do nothing for 40 years, things are going to change in big ways in terms of assessed values of properties, willingness to live there, ability to get insurance. Need to think about economics differently. Bankers and insurance companies are starting to think about it that way.

NN has a floodplain property acquisition program. Transfer development rights. Rolling easements—in anticipation of SLR.

Local gov’ts should try to “buy low and sell high.” Don’t want to pay a lot now for property whose value is peaking. Is there a financial tool to allow consideration of declining value? Private market is going to adjust value. Govt role is to consider what services they will continue to provide. In some areas services may become so expensive to provide that they are not sustainable.

People don’t know that they are at risk. Need disclosure requirement at purchase—letting people know that property floods or is in flood zone. For that you need to be able to map it and tell them about it. Realtor is required to tell them about flood insurance but that’s it. Property industry probably not interested in telling people about risk. Ex. Disclosure requirement about noise from airfield. If there were one HR SLR website with links to GIS and to FEMA. **One stop for information about risk—recommendation for regional hazard mitigation planning efforts. Tie current flooding risk to projected SLR risk. Insurance availability is starting to be a problem for people, but loan availability may be next. “blue-lining” –areas where you can’t get private homeowners insurance.

Incorporate risk into comprehensive planning and into public ed efforts. Good work gets undermined by aggressive citizens who want to protect their property. Backlash of citizens against SLR being included in planning (Mathews). People don't want to see it on paper. End up with localities wasting resources on very local solutions.

Implementation challenge: mix of state, federal, local, and conflicting incentives.

How to deal with established neighborhoods that are at risk, where people have a lot of resources and influence to push decision-makers?

Communication and education to encourage citizens to choose best solutions is critical!

Redevelopment strategies.

Knowledge Management System can solve some of the communication and coordination problems. Get participation across the region. Help people share information and publish it (make it available to the public.)

What do people expect/want from a KMS?

Ariel—KMS will allow users to input content that will be seen by others and can spark collaboration

Critical needs:

- Better elevation data
- Regional LIDAR coverage
- Resources for justification for SLR estimates used in planning.
- One-pager on SLR in the region (or other handouts)
- Communication strategy (educational framework—should message be going to kids, since the impacts will be seen in their lifetimes?). Other specialized audiences—military families . . . In addition to talking about what the issue is, need to communicate what is being done about the issue (that might require a regional SLR strategy).
- KMS brings together information and allows the group to make it more consistent, makes resources available for download
- More tide gauge stations
- Information about legal toolkit for SLR planning in VA

Future Forum Topics:

- Legal tools for SLR planning (WM Coastal Policy Law Clinic?)

- Chesapeake Bay regulations and movement due to SLR
- Breakout group focusing on behavioral marketing and communication
- Expand stakeholder groups to include insurance industry, builders, land-use lawyers, and other groups.
- NOAA presentation on predicting local impacts/evacuation needs for hurricanes
- VMASC creating graphic alternatives to 2-d maps.